a given volume of shipping could render in a given time were heavily reduced. There was also a great deal of congestion on the railways and ports which delayed the loading and unloading of ships. Much of that congestion was inevitable, but much of it could have been avoided by businesslike supervision and control.

With the problems which resulted from this growing strain upon our shipping resources I was not myself departmentally concerned during the early part of the War. The one important measure for which I had some responsibility was the scheme of War Risks Insurance which was brought into force at the beginning of August, 1914.

War Risks Insurance

This was one of those financial arrangements with which, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, I was closely occupied during the days immediately preceding and following the outbreak of the War, and of which I have given some account in the first volume of these Memoirs. The history of the War Risks Insurance Scheme can be briefly outlined in a few words. For some time past the Huth Jackson Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence had been at work upon a scheme for maintaining the shipping services of this country in the event of war by providing State assistance for the underwriting of the special war risks which would arise. Their important task had been completed shortly before the crisis arose.

When the Great War threatened, there

were immediate signs of panic among shipowners and underwriters. On 30th July, 1914, chartering ceased at North American ports, vessels already loaded with grain being held up owing to the impossibility of insuring except at prohibitive rates, and there